

*Government Orders*

say that straddling the fence like that is very dangerous; it is dangerous for anybody but it is especially dangerous for a political party. It is likely to lead to sterility, and sterility in a political party is perhaps the worst of all possible fates. Perhaps it is something that we can look forward to in the future for this Liberal party that sits here in opposition, because it is a Liberal party which, on this important point of principle, this question of whether it is possible to apply laws retroactively, really does not care.

I have to admit that in my youth, misguided as it was, I actually was sympathetic to the Liberal party. I actually at one point went—

**Mr. Milliken:** I thought you were a member.

**Mr. Langdon:** No, I never went that far. Somebody suggested I was once a member of the Liberal party. My sins, I am sure, have been great but they have never sunk to those depths. However I did once attend a Liberal party convention. In fact I have to confess I even took part in a demonstration for a Liberal party leadership candidate in the province of Ontario.

**Mr. Milliken:** You should go to Calgary.

**Mr. Speller:** Repent.

**Mr. Langdon:** Fortunately that candidate—it was Joe Greene, by the way, a former member of this House—did not win and so problems with potential schizophrenia in my life were avoided.

At the very heart of the Liberal party of Lester Pearson, the very heart of the Liberal party of those days, the very heart I thought of the Liberal party led by the member for Vancouver—Quadra, was a commitment to small *l* liberalism. At the heart of small *l* liberalism is a belief in the rule of law, a belief that we cannot through Parliament, a place where we believe in democracy, rewrite law for the past. We cannot pass legislation which will apply two years before that legislation even saw the light of day in the House of Commons. Yet, that is what this piece of legislation does.

Frankly I cannot understand my colleague from Essex—Kent, who comes from an adjoining constituency,

presenting such positive comments with respect to this legislation. I can only hope that another member of the Liberal party will get up and say I was mistaken and say that in fact the Liberal party is still a party that does have at least some principles which it holds dear. One such principle is the principle which the hon. member shared with me in committee, the principle that one cannot rewrite legislation two years into the past.

I look forward very much to hearing the member from Montreal. I hope he will be speaking next on behalf of the Liberal party and will make quite clear that the strong words he spoke against retroactivity in the legislative committee were in fact on behalf of his party and that his party will be voting against this retroactive piece of legislation just as our party will be, just as the member for Laval indicates he will be voting against it.

**Mr. Ricard:** I didn't say that.

**Mr. Langdon:** Oh, I am sorry. I must have misinterpreted the member. He said that he too was against the retroactivity within this bill.

**Mr. Ricard:** I did not. I said I was for it.

**Mr. Langdon:** But he is still prepared to vote for the bill.

**Mr. Ricard:** Probably yes.

**Mr. Langdon:** Probably yes. Oh, dear.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

It is very difficult for those Quebec members, they simply cannot take position and vote for important principles, for small caisses populaires in the Province of Quebec.

**Mr. Ricard:** That is not what I said. I said there was existing legislation.

[*English*]

**Mr. Langdon:** Seriously, this is an important point of principle which we are going to vote against in this party. It is a point of principle which leads us to vote against this legislation, because we do not feel that it is right to rewrite history.